

Stand Together: One Hope

October 3, 2020

Leif Enger has written a masterpiece of a book entitled, *Peace Like A River*. The book is written from the perspective of Reuben Land telling of a

“Let me say something about that word: miracle. For too long it's been used to characterize things or events that, though pleasant, are entirely normal. Peeping chicks at Easter time, spring generally, a clear sunrise after an overcast week - a miracle, people say, as if they've been educated from greeting cards. I'm sorry, but nope. Such things are worth our notice every day of the week, but to call them miracles evaporates the strength of the word.

Real miracles bother people, like strange sudden pains unknown in medical literature. It's true: They rebut every rule all we good citizens take comfort in. Lazarus obeying order and climbing up out of the grave - now there's a miracle, and you can bet it upset a lot of folks who were standing around at the time. When a person dies, the earth is generally unwilling to cough him back up.

A miracle contradicts the will of the earth. My sister, Swede, who often sees to the nub, offered this: People fear miracles because they fear being changed - though ignoring them will change you also. Swede said another thing, too, and it rang in me like a bell: No miracle happens without a witness. Someone to declare, Here's what I saw. Here's how it went. Make of it what you will.”

“If he were here to begin the account, I believe Dad would say what he said to Swede and me on the worst night of all our lives: We and the world, my children, will always be at war. Retreat is impossible. Arm yourselves.”

How are we to arm ourselves?

Hope—genuine, unshakable hope is a miracle—How are we to arm ourselves against the onslaught of rancor and dissentiousness in this noisy cultural moment?

How are we to arm ourselves against the dissentious, clashing cultural moment we find ourselves in?

Hunker down?

Get angry?

Be afraid?

No.

Today we learn how to arm ourselves with hope.

Not hope in general. But our ONE hope. That is what Ephesians 4 tells us.

Ephesians 4 stands BOTH as a roadmap to unity and directions to maintain unity. As we’ve been noting there are 7 things that constitute the ground of unity. Said another way, We are united around—you can see them in verse 4.

One Body
One Spirit
One Hope
One Lord
One Faith
One Baptism
One God

“Ours is a seven-fold unity.” Roark

Remarkable what is NOT included. Our temptation is to say—yeah, yeah those things are important but what about _____. That is our temptation and we should fight against that temptation. We should be most familiar with the foundational things not the debatable things.

Today, we arm ourselves with our ONE hope.

For us—hope is not a thing—but a person.

PROP: Jesus is our ONE hope.

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God

and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:1–6

PRAY

1. A Word on Hope

You are and I are hope fueled creatures. That is why it so very important for us to invest our hope in the right place. A loss of hope is a death sentence. And misplaced hope is even worse. Misplaced hope condemns people to a hollow and unfulfilling life.

Hope here in Ephesians 4 is being used VERY differently than we usually use the word. If I say, “I hope one day to travel to the straits of Gibraltar.” Am I going to make it there? Probably not.

OR if on Friday afternoon, one of your co-workers asks what are you doing on Saturday? And you reply, “I have to do some grocery shopping, get the kids to their games, and I hope to do some yardwork.”

How likely does yardwork seem? Not likely.

Hope for us means something like—a good but fruitless intention. In other words, Hope means, “maybe but probably not.”

When we think Hope means maybe but probably not, what do we do with biblical verses like this?

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 15:13

Maybe. Probably not.

“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,” Psalm 33:18

Maybe. Probably not.

“and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:5

Maybe. Probably not.

We REALLY need to have our hope rightly ordered.

Your hope defines your life.

How do we fortify ourselves with the biblical understanding of hope?

- You can’t choose your own hopes.

Ouch. That is the trouble right there. When we choose our own hopes we build our lives on things insufficient to bear the weight of our eternal souls. We invariably choose the wrong

things to build our lives around. Good things, but not eternal things.

Having money: This hope is easy to knock over. But I include it because so many people place so much stock in getting more. Even those who have money report that it is not all that they thought.

Being a mom: I include this because it can be easy to lose your identity in your children and how they are doing. And when they become adults and start their own lives, you can wonder who you are.

A Presidential Candidate: I mention this because everyone has an opinion on what is best for our nation. Both sides seem to think that all hope is lost if their candidate does not win. Even if he does—he will disappoint you.

Ah. You see, you need the Lord to give you your hopes. You and I will invariably pick the wrong thing. We need our Lord to tell us—here you can invest all your hope.

We get a hint in the two words we noted in Ephesians 4:4—

Vs. 4,

“just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—”

One hope—

2. *One Hope*

This is not MANY hopes.

This is ONE hope.

And the very clear implication here is that we all—all of us—share ONE primary hope. It is not as if: You have a hope. I have a hope. They have a hope.

We all have the same ONE hope.

WE have a hope. And it has nothing to do with the 2020 election. Does that mean the election does not matter? No. Not at all.

But the results of this election CANNOT be the foundation of our ONE hope.

We need something sturdier.

I'm not going to tell you anything you don't know, just something you and I are apt to forget. What is our ONE hope?

It centers on Jesus.

What Jesus has done for us.
And what Jesus will do for us.

It is that simple.

Makes sense place your hope in Jesus—why?

Love: He loves you. Not with a convenient—if you are popular I'm with you—kind of love. Rather, it is much more robust. He knows who you are. No hiding from him. And yet he still loves you. More than you can know. His love is eternal and such that you cannot begin to understand it without help from the Holy Spirit.

His love is more than words. He did not just say that he loved us—he showed that he loved us. In the single greatest act of sacrifice ever known, Jesus of Nazareth laid down his life for sinners like me. And You. Though you will live forever, the wonder of his sacrifice for you—you will never fully understand. It is an expression of love for you impossible to overstate.

He is alive forevermore. He died but rose again to exhibit the defeat of the power of death. Any who follow him will not experience eternal death. It only makes logical sense to center your life on someone who cannot die.

He promises he is for you. Think about how meaningful this is. He CANNOT die. Even the most fulfilling marriage and happiest union will be interrupted by death. So, when your husband or wife commit to you they commit for, “as long as we both shall live.” Jesus has committed himself to us as long as he shall live.

Forever.

Do you see that our ONE hope is not just about believing we will be okay and live with Jesus in heaven after we die? It is so much more than that. It is—that Jesus is the ground of your hope right now, today. This very moment.

We cannot afford to quibble with secondary hopes.

One of the misconceptions about Christian hope is that it only kicks in when you die. Now, to be sure, death is stalking all of us. For some of us it may just be around the next bend, for others of us our appointment with death is decades ahead.

But death is coming.

When death does come, you have a strong and sure hope in Jesus.

But that is not all.

You have a hope right now. How do I know this? Because we have Jesus right now.

Our salvation is not just so that we get a clutch of blessings and avoid hell. It is so that we can get to God, and in some ways have him. God is the reason we each are saved now, and we are saved for him.

- Though the full complement of hell's fury pounds at your soul.
- Though the weight of life-long disappointment saps your

bones.

- Though father time pillages your body.
- Though old sins hound you like a specter.
- Though you are haunted by the ghosts of days gone by.
- Though in the November of life you feel the reach of death's icy hand.

Jesus is our HOPE.

When you face these things it is SO important that you see HOPE not as a mere thing, but as a person. You have ONE hope and his name is Jesus.

And you can HOPE in Jesus because he ALWAYS LOVES YOU.

He loves us because he loves us. He has set his affection on us and he will never let us go. He will ALWAYS be there. Not like others that constantly push you to do more to measure up or risk their disappointment and displeasure.

- When he thinks of you—he smiles. Since he is always thinking of us, he is always smiling.
- If you go to him now—he would throw up his arms and say, “I am so glad you came.”
- He is always glad to see you.
- When you fall away—he will go to the ends of the earth to make sure you are safe.
- When you talk to God NOTHING can distract him. He is always interested in what you have to say.
- He is eager to give you what you need.

- He is eager to give you more than you need.
- Mostly he is eager to be with you.
- He doesn't see you as a failure, but as his.
- He could never send you away.
- He never says, "I think I have been patient enough."
- He never says, "I've given you all I can."
- He never says, "When are you going to learn?"
- He never says, "When are you going to listen?"
- He never says, "I told you so."

There may be times we all have to say this to people in our lives—but that is what is so different about Jesus. When he should say, "I've given you all I can," OR, "When are you going to listen?"

He says—I love you.

THAT is a ground of robust hope. You don't have to manufacture your own hopes, you have Jesus.

There is HOPE today in Jesus.

And Forever.

One day will leave this earth and go to be with Jesus. And our hope will be sight.

We know we will finally be who we were meant to be. We will be sinless. No more fighting with judgmental thoughts. No more temptations to jump to conclusions. No more fighting off bitterness or holding our tongue. No more taking thoughts

captive.

Our bodies will be what they were created to be. We were never designed to grow old and break down to die and be buried in the earth. We were designed to live forever. We were designed to get stronger with each passing day. We will one day.

There will be no wheelchairs. There will be no cancer. There will be no graveyards. There will be no saying good-bye. There will be no shattered dreams. There will be no crying. There will be no pain. God will declare, "Behold, I am making all things new!" And the old order—the things we are used to will pass away.

The days of the power of death will be over. Forever.

Further,

We will all witness death's death. You know that death is sick right now. Death used to be a virulent, strapping specimen of raw power. He used to muscle into everyone's life and have his way.

Nothing could stop him. Jesus our HOPE did.

Except one day, someone died, only to rise again three days later. This someone was Jesus. Death swallowed him whole but it turns out that Jesus swallowed death up by rising again.

This is why death is sick—and it doesn't look good. He isn't what he was. One day we will see death die, as he is pitched into the lake of fire.

And we will cheer.

THIS is the ONE hope that Unites us. Jesus is our one hope.

We and the world, Center Church, will always be at war.

Retreat is impossible.

Arm yourselves.”

How? With **Jesus** our hope.

PRAY